The time lag involved between placing order for procurement and supply of stores ranges between 9 months and 2 months, depending upon the source through which the procurements made, *e.g.* through rate contract, ex-import, trade, public sector units or ordnance factories.

In case of procurement through ordnance factories, the lead time has been reduced from 24 months to 30 months.

Status of Military Nursing Service Officers

3391. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether members of Military Nursing Service are commissioned officers;

(b) if so, under what authority/order they are commissioned alongwith the details thereof;

(c) if not, why they are wearing the uniform with Rank Insignia of Army Commissioned Ranks like Lieutenants, Captains, Lt. Colonels etc.;

(d) whether MNS cadre is under the Army Act; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) Yes Sir.

(b) to (c) Officers of the Military Nursing Service are commissioned under the authority of the Indian Military Nursing Service Ordinance 1943 (XXX of 1943).

(d) and (e) The MNS cadre is governed by Indian Military Nursing Service Ordinance 1943. Section 9 of the Ordinance provides that the Army Act 1950 shall, to such extent and subject to such adaptation and modifications as may be prescribed, apply to the officers of MNS. Under this provision, only some provisions of the Army Act 1950, relating to disciplinary matters are made applicable to the Military Nursing officers.

Army Level Talks with China

3392. SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the outcome of the army level talks held with China;

(b) whether any steps have been taken to reduce tension on the Indc-China border; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) to (c) As a part of existing Confidence Building Measures, military-to-military level exchanges have been taking place between India and China. Such exchanges are in the nature of goodwill visits and no formal discussions to resolve outstanding issues between the two countries are held during such visits. However, such visits have promoted friendly contacts between the armed forces of the two sides and have contributed to the improvement of bilateral relations between the two countries and also maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the India-China border.

2. The Joint Working Groups/Expert Groups of the two countries hold regular discussions through diplomatic channels to resolve outstanding issues.

Accident at Varsova, Mumbai

3393. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to negligence of "Coastal Protection Force" three small children have lost their lives at Varsova, Mumbai;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Coastal protection Force helicopter took long time to come for rescue inspite of repeated request from their relatives; and

(c) what steps Government are going to take to protect people from such incidences?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI KRISHNAM RAJU): (a) and (b) On 6th June, 2001 at about 1830 hrs Police Control Room, Varsova informed Coast Guard Regional headquarters (West), Mumbai about the incident. At 1855 a Coast Guard Chetak helicopter took off. This helicopter, on reaching the Varsova beach, carried out extensive search in the area. In the meantime, the Police Control Room, Varsova informed Coast guard headquarters (West) that the bodies of the missing boys have been recovered and therefore search by helicopter may be terminated. The Coast Guard helicopter thereafter, terminated the search.

(c) The solution to this problem lies in positioning of lifeguards and adequate safety measures at these beaches, which is the responsibility of the local administration. Coast guard would continue its endeavours to attend to the rescue calls promptly.